

James Grayson on an earlier crisis for Murdoch

Murdoch's Wapping nights

The Murdoch Empire may be in crisis. It has recently closed the *News of the World*, its first British newspaper. Several staff have resigned, some have been arrested.

25 years ago industrial action took place over changes in working practices and relocation from 'Fleet Street' (in fact Bouverie Street and Grays Inn Road), to Wapping. Leadership from trade union hierarchy was lacking, the Labour party leadership was supine. Are there parallels?

During May there was an exhibition about the Wapping dispute at the Marx Memorial Library. It will travel around and it is a must visit for anyone interested in this book.

The book reminds us of the degree of pre-planning by the management before the dispute and the partisan role of the police. The officer in charge of the policing resigned from the force under a cloud and was convicted of theft from a supermarket three years later!

One of the interesting features is the extent of vernacular reports from participants. Each chapter could be a topic. Chapter two is entitled 'Rupert Murdoch's British Empire'. His history up to the mid-eighties gives cause for the thoughtful to wonder whether he is a fit and proper media proprietor before his television interests were as extensive as presently.

Do you remember the cold nights in Wapping?